

## **HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Report to Corporate Select Committee**

**20 March 2017**

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Corporate Equality Objectives</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>Councillor Thrane - Executive Councillor for Finance and Corporate Services</b>
<b>OFFICER:</b>	<b>Mark Forrester - Democratic &amp; Community Services Manager</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>Non specific</b>

#### **Appendices Attached:**

**Appendix A: Corporate Equality Objectives 2015/16**

**Appendix B: Corporate Equality Objectives 2017/18**

1. **Reason for the Report:** The report provides an update on the implementation of the Council's Equality Objectives.
  
2. **Recommendation**
  - 2.1 To note the actions proposed in the report, including agreement to adopt revised Corporate Equality Objectives.
  
3. **Executive Summary**
  - 3.1 In 2015 both Alliance Councils adopted a new Equality and Diversity Policy and approved Corporate Equality Objectives.
  
  - 3.2 Equality research has been undertaken following agreement of these objectives and progress made to achieve the Council's objectives. Detail as to the progress against the agreed actions is included at section 7.3 of the report.

3.3 It is proposed to retain, with minor amendment, the current Equality Objectives for 2017/18 as attached at Appendix B of the report.

#### 4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 This report relates to the Corporate Aim of providing Quality Services in Partnership with Communities.

#### 5. **Options and Analysis**

5.1 That the Executive considers and comments on the proposed Corporate Equality Objectives (Recommended).

5.2 That the Executive does not consider or comment on the Corporate Equality Objectives (Not recommended).

#### 6. **Implications**

##### 6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

Fulfilling the duties of the Equality Act 2010 will contribute to achieving increased safety for the most vulnerable within our communities.

##### 6.2 Workforce

The Joint Equality and Diversity Policy supports the Council's approach to providing a modern and diverse workforce.

##### 6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

Undertaking the actions associated with the proposed Corporate Equality Objectives will enable the Alliance Councils to meet their Equality Duties.

##### 6.4 Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial implications from the proposed policy and actions.

##### 6.5 Legal

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the Council to publish Equality Objectives and report on their achievement.

##### 6.6 Sustainability

None.

## 6.7 Internal and External Consultation

The proposed Corporate Equality Objectives provide for consultation with 'protected groups'.

## 6.8 Risk Assessment

An effective policy and implemented plan of action will reduce the risk of poor decision making and legal challenge.

## 7. **Background and Detail**

7.1 The Equality Act 2010 places a number of duties on Councils, including the duty to publish evidence of compliance with the duties in the Act and the Council's Equality Objectives.

7.2 In 2015 both Alliance Councils adopted a new Equality and Diversity Policy and approved Corporate Equality Objectives (**Appendix A attached**).

7.3 Progress against the actions proposed in the Action Plan agreed in 2015 is as follows:

<b>High Peak Borough Council &amp; Staffordshire Moorlands District Council</b>		
<b>Equality &amp; Diversity Scheme: Action Plan 2015</b>		
<b>Equality Objectives</b>	<b>Proposed actions.</b>	<b>Progress</b>
To understand who lives in our communities and their needs.	Identifying Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data and customer information held within services and determining how this information can be monitored and used to influence service delivery.	Work took place to establish information on service users as part of the Transformation process and the proposed new CRM system will provide the required improvement in equalities data and customer insight.  Data on 'protected groups' in the Borough/District has been collated and made available within the Council.  Initial research and engagement with protected groups was undertaken in 2016.
To clearly state our equality priorities and ensure that we have	Confirming the performance monitoring mechanisms for equalities linked to the	The service planning process commenced in 2016/17 and this element of

systems in place to achieve them.	service planning process for 2015/16 onwards.	the plan is continuing. Any equalities issues or training needs identified as part of the service planning process have been captured and included in the Learning and Development Framework.
To ensure that we include those with 'protected characteristics' in our consultation and engagement processes.	Reviewing the consultation policy/strategy to ensure that mechanisms for reaching 'protected characteristic' groups are in place.	The policy has been reviewed and a revised approach proposed (March 2017).  Initial research and engagement with protected groups was undertaken in 2016.
To ensure that equality performance actions are included in relevant service plans and monitored.	Ensure systematic completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).	Key decisions have been informed by an Equality Impact Assessment. Each relevant decision must have sufficient evidence that equality was considered appropriately.  The Modern Gov. committee management system provides an opportunity to ensure robust compliance.
To ensure that our workforce reflects as far as possible the makeup of the community we serve	Reviewing the workforce balance as part of our workforce development strategy to put procedures in place to make the workforce more representative of our communities.	The Transformation Service has been reviewing HR policy and practice.  Work has been initiated with the University of Derby to deliver a comprehensive programme of training for staff.

7.4 The Equality Objectives approved in 2015 were intended to be 'holding' or 'enabling' objectives with the expectation that work undertaken would inform the development of outcome focused objectives – that is focused on what difference would be made for local communities. The assumption was that further research and engagement with protected groups would provide evidence of need.

#### Community Engagement

- 7.5 In 2016 Engaging Communities Staffordshire undertook engagement work on behalf of both Alliance Councils. Their report identifies the groups they engaged with, the challenges and difficulties they faced in making contact with some of the groups, the insights gained and recommendations for building contact with these groups.
- 7.6 The challenges and difficulties of engagement are thought to be reflective of the fact that individuals identified as belonging to some of the groups are few in number. One consequence is that areas such as High Peak and Staffordshire Moorlands, unlike larger urban settlements, do not have voluntary sector organisations associated with all of the groups. These groups tend to be targeted for engagement purposes by urban authorities.
- 7.7 The result is that the work does not add significantly to our understanding of the needs of these groups of people and does not provide evidence that specific outcome focused equality objectives are required. For example, the report identified issues relating to jobs, housing and community safety are already priorities for the Alliance Councils. The critical point in relation to demonstrating the Council's compliance with the Equality Act is that the Council can show a serious attempt to engage has been made. The Equality Act does not impose an unreasonable expectation in relation to engagement.
- 7.8 In determining new Equality Objectives for the Councils three points are particularly relevant:
- 7.8.1 The recommendations from the report about future consultation and engagement have been integrated into the Alliance Councils' revised Consultation Policy.
- 7.8.2 The need to achieve efficiency savings through service change continues to be one of the most significant areas of Council activity and therefore a focus for future consultation. Engagement with protected groups will consequently be focused on key issues.
- 7.8.3 While the current Equality Objectives are not framed as outcomes the actions associated with them will lead the Council to focus on key issues and, therefore, potential outcomes for protected groups.

#### Proposed Way Forward

- 7.9 It is proposed that the Council retains, with slight amendment, the current equality objectives for 2017/18 **(as attached at Appendix B)**.
- 7.10 Key actions for future activity include:

- Data - Continuing to develop customer insight in relation to groups with protected characteristics and staff data through the staff survey.
- Training - Implementing the planned equality and diversity awareness training and training in the Council's policies and procedures.
- Consultation - Undertaking consultation with protected groups as set out in the Council's consultation policy.
- Integrating Equality Impact Assessments into the Modern Gov. committee management system to ensure appropriate consideration of equalities matters in all Council decision making.

Mark Trillo

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**Web Links and  
Background Papers**

Equality Research Report

**Location**

Buxton Town Hall

**Contact details**

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